



## **JOB HUNTING IN TODAY'S ECONOMY**

Information, techniques and  
tips on finding the right job

## ABOUT WORKSOURCE

Helping workers find meaningful employment is a leading priority of the WorkSource system. When you visit any one of our nearly 70 locations statewide, you'll connect to an array of employment and training services provided through state government agencies, workforce development councils, community and technical colleges and local non-profits.

Whether you're looking for work, need to attend an employment workshop or simply want to research a promising new line of work, WorkSource can help you succeed.

If you have questions or need assistance with your job hunt, visit your local WorkSource today. To find the office nearest you, visit [go2worksource.com](http://go2worksource.com). WorkSource is your one-stop access point to employment and training.

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## INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides some of the most current job-finding tips and techniques available. It includes information from personnel directors of large corporations, as well as insight from small-business owners and operators. With hands-on activities, helpful strategies and tangible examples for each step in the job-search process, this publication gives you the tools you'll need for a successful job search.

## FACING UNEMPLOYMENT

How do you deal with being jobless? Most people have to deal with unemployment or underemployment one or more times in their lives. The ability to cope with new feelings like low self-esteem and maintaining self-respect can positively affect the outcome of your job search.

### Attitude can help

Just as a negative outlook can make your job search miserable, a positive approach can revitalize your hunt.

- Your energy and time are precious. Don't waste them on anger or depression.
- We all know how unfair life can be. Don't dwell on it; move on.
- Look forward and apply yourself to tomorrow.

### Focus on self-esteem

It's normal for your self-image to suffer when you find yourself out of work, but it doesn't have to. Take some time to think about yourself. Make a list of all your strengths and assets and review it daily.

### Maintaining a schedule

A daily routine is even more important now. Keep the same hours as when you were working. Get plenty of rest, eat a healthy diet, and exercise. You will need all of your energy for your job search.

### Financial considerations

Evaluate your financial situation. Identify nonessentials that can be eliminated. If your bills still exceed your income, contact your creditors. Speaking with them truthfully can save many headaches, particularly if you have a good credit history. Research your eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. Apply for benefits via the Internet at [www.esd.wa.gov](http://www.esd.wa.gov) or by calling 800-318-6022 (TTY 800-365-8969). Telecenters are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

### Support from family and friends

Family and friends can provide both moral and financial support. Ask for help if you need it. Discuss your situation honestly. Assure friends and relatives that you have no intention of becoming a recluse, and you welcome their

support. Ask for their help with job leads, too. Right now, you need your family and friends more than ever — don't underestimate them.

### Other resources

While you're searching, the government and your community may be able to help you with food, medical and other bills. The only way to find out is to apply.

**Food-Stamp program:** Contact the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to apply for food stamps. Look in the phone book for the Community Service Office (CSO) closest to you.

**Medical care:** Various programs provide free or low-cost medical assistance. Check with your nearest DSHS Community Service Office.

**Public assistance:** You may qualify for a Washington State public-assistance grant. Apply at a local DSHS office. Even if the grant is very small, side benefits might be important, such as provisions for food, child care or job training.

**Food banks:** Many community programs provide free food if you need it. Contact your city, county, neighborhood church or local charitable organizations.

## ORGANIZING YOUR JOB SEARCH

To succeed in your job hunt, approach your search just like a full-time job.

### In a full-time job

You have regular responsibilities. You report to work at a certain time. Your employer has performance expectations you must meet. Your job search should involve a similar level of commitment.

### To find a job

Set your own agenda. You have to be your own "boss," and self-discipline is the key. Begin your workday at 8 a.m. sharp. Take an hour for lunch, and give yourself a couple of breaks during the day.

### Plan your work

The following pages cover all the steps in your job search, from developing an effective résumé to researching the job market and diagramming your approach. Take the steps in

sequence. First, assess your skills. Then, research the job market. Next, develop your résumé and learn how to write an effective cover letter. Finally, learn how to ace your job interviews.

This may seem overwhelming, but if you organize your time carefully you'll speed through the process. Before you start, develop an overall plan listing all of the steps involved in your job search. Under each step, list the actions needed to finish that step.

### Work your plan

- Get in the habit of making a "To Do" list every day. Each day, resolve to complete all the tasks on the list.
- Start recording every contact you make regarding your job search, noting times, dates, names and what happened.
- Keep a list of "hot leads," and follow up with them as soon as possible.

### Organize your activities

Some things — like telephoning — you will probably do at home. Plan other home-based activities for the same period. When you have an appointment in a particular area, try to group other appointments and errands in the same area around the same time of day. This saves time and money. Remember, morning hours are the best time to schedule your contacts.

## SKILLS AND ABILITIES

You can approach your job search in several different ways. First, we'll show you a few different ways to identify and inventory your skills and qualities. Initially, you'll want to examine three areas: your work history, your education, and your interests or hobbies. If you have no work history, develop your skill list by detailing your education and hobbies.

### Work history

Use three columns (see sample table on page 3). The left column is for the job or activity, the middle column for work duties, and the right column for skills needed to perform each task. Begin with the jobs pertinent to the position you are applying for, starting with your most recent

job. Include volunteer, part-time, summer, self-employment and military experience.

You want to express skills and strengths in ways that are important to employers, and cite examples of when and how they were used effectively. A firm grasp of your skills helps you build strong résumés and solid interviewing techniques. You must be able to identify your qualifications and package them to appeal to employers.

A job search is really "finding an employer who is looking for someone like you." This means always having the employer's perspective in mind. When "looking for a job," you pursue only those positions that already exist. A job has to be created before you can find it. However, if you expand the search to include "employers who are looking for someone like you," suddenly you're pursuing both actual and potential jobs. "Do you have a job for me?" is different than "Could your organization use someone with my assets?" The latter question might result in an employer creating a job that does not yet exist. However, for this to happen, you must be able to tell that employer what you know and can do.

The second question above is also more personal and creates more options and possibilities than the first. The first question assumes that the employer has already done most of the work by creating the job. The second question assumes that the job seeker can help the employer meet important needs. Employers sometimes create positions for strong applicants. You must be able to describe your strengths in ways that will interest employers.

Constantly consider the employer's perspective:

- What do you know?
- What can you do?
- What qualities do you have that will contribute to this organization?
- Do you know how to match your skills with our needs?

The answers to these questions provide the framework for any successful job search.

**Transferable workplace skills** include any knowledge or ability required to do a job or perform a task. You can acquire these skills through both paid and unpaid work experiences or classes that are geared to a particular occupation. They can be job specific, such as being able to use a lathe, teach a writing class, or drive a special vehicle. They also can be more general, such as being a team player,

Job/Activity	Duties	Skills/Talents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmworker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pick vegetables and fruit. Use hoes, shovels and sheers to plant, cultivate and prune fruit trees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspect fruits for damage and ripeness.</li> <li>Work quickly and skillfully with hands.</li> <li>Good with tools.</li> <li>Can work outdoors for long periods.</li> <li>Physical endurance.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homemaker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be everything for everybody.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage budgets.</li> <li>Perform multiple tasks simultaneously.</li> <li>Prioritization.</li> <li>Knowledge of human development.</li> <li>Teaching and training others.</li> <li>Decision-making.</li> <li>Crisis intervention and response.</li> <li>First Aid.</li> <li>Cooking, cleaning and laundry.</li> <li>Hostess.</li> </ul>

knowing how to decipher a flow chart or having expertise with a software program.

Transferable skills come in many forms. In fact, most skills are transferable, but many people don't see the connections. They think of themselves as narrowly defined by an occupation or membership in an industry, rather than as an array of skills. You should recognize the importance of transferability and see that you have many skills that can work in more than one situation.

In addition to transferable skills, employers also look for personal qualities. These affect how you go about performing the transferable skills. Examples include honesty, dependability and determination.

In the current economy, with work changing rapidly and people moving between jobs more frequently, being able to identify, group, bundle and transfer skills in new ways is crucial for every job seeker.

### Marketing yourself

Ask yourself, "How can I market myself to an employer?" A simple first step is to sort out your skills and personal qualities. The categories to use are Information, People, Things and Ideas.

**Information**—Information skills involve working with data (e.g., words, numbers, charts or graphs). Occupations that rely heavily on information skills include accountants, researchers, data analyzers and many kinds of record keepers. Skills related specifically to information include computing, analyzing, combining, collecting, copying, arranging, sorting, storing, sending, filing and researching. In the information age, the number of jobs requiring people who handle information is growing.

**People**—People skills involve contact with other individuals. "People" occupations include teachers, counselors, waitpersons, nurses and flight attendants. People skills include advising, informing, instructing, serving, supervising, counseling, explaining, training and assigning. The increased emphasis on service, combined with the fact that many workplaces are now organized around teams or work-groups, means that more individuals will need people skills to succeed in the workplace.

**Things**—These skills involve working with objects (e.g., tools, conveyances, substances or natural resources), and require the ability to make the object work as intended. Occupations in this category include plumbers, carpenters, drivers, loggers and fishers.

TRANSFERABLE AND PERSONAL SKILLS			
Accurate	Dynamic	Listener, good	Takes initiative
Achievement-oriented	Eager	Logical	Teachable
Adaptable	Easy-going	Loyal	Team player
Adept	Economical	Mature	Thinks quickly
Alert	Effective	Meets deadlines	Thoughtful
Ambitious	Efficient	Methodical	Thorough
Analytical	Energetic	Motivated	Thrifty
Articulate	Enterprising	Neat appearance	Tidy
Artistic	Enthusiastic	Objective-oriented	Tolerant
Assertive	Experienced	Obliging	Tough
Astute	Expert	Open-minded	Trusting
Aware	Fair-minded	Optimistic	Trustworthy
Bold	Firm	Organized	Understanding
Businesslike	Flexible	Original	Unexcitable
Calm	Focused	Outgoing	Unusual
Capable	Friendly	Patient	Verbal
Careful	Future-oriented	Peaceable	Versatile
Cautious	Get along	Perceptive	Vigorous
Challenge, likes	Good judgment	Perfection, seek	Visionary
Character, good	Good-natured	Persistent	Warm
Cheerful	Hard worker	Pleasant	Well-organized
Clear-thinking	Healthy	Poised	Willing to learn
Competent	Helpful	Polite	Wise
Competitive	High energy	Positive	
Confident	Honest	Practical	
Conscientious	Humorous	Precise	
Conservative	Imaginative	Pride	
Considerate	Impulsive	Problem-solver	
Consistent	Independent	Productive	
Constructive	Industrious	Professional	
Cooperative	Ingenious	Progressive	
Creative	Innovative	Persevering	
Curious	Inquisitive	Sharp-witted	
Decisive	Insightful	Sincere	
Dedicated	Intelligent	Sociable	
Dependable	Intuitive	Spontaneous	
Detailed	Inventive	Stable	
Determined	Kind	Steady	
Diligent	Knowledgeable	Strong	
Disciplined	Leader	Successful	
Discreet	Learn quickly	Supportive	
Discriminating	Likable	Tactful	

**Note:** Choices CT and other software programs that can help identify transferable skills for different occupations are available in most WorkSource offices. More information on WorkSource and other resources is provided on pages 7 & 8.



**Ideas**—These skills involve thinking up solutions and concepts that make things run more smoothly. Idea people dream up new products and think of ways to improve productivity and service. Advertising people, marketers, composers, artists, inventors and think-tank personnel are examples of idea occupations. Skills in this category include thinking, visioning, imagining, creating, developing, designing, improving, recommending and connecting.

As the workplace becomes more complex and technical, you likely will need a combination of these skills. People who once worked mainly with “things” now work in teams and handle data. People accustomed to working mainly with data now may be asked to generate “ideas” to improve quality. The purpose of including the four areas here is to provide a simple framework for identifying skills.

Let’s look at someone who has worked as an automotive technician. This person’s skill analysis might look as follows:

- **Information**—I listen to the customer’s description of what is wrong, get diagnostic data from the computer and sometimes ask co-workers for information. I also can get information quickly from a manual and am able to translate technical language into terms customers can understand. I must be accurate and detailed when using this information.
- **People**—I explain to customers, troubleshoot with co-workers, talk with suppliers and check in with my manager periodically. I sometimes have to deal with difficult people. I must be patient, helpful and businesslike.
- **Things**—I use a variety of tools, equipment and replacement parts. I am constantly observing, listening to, measuring and manipulating objects. I must be analytical and methodical.
- **Ideas**—I regularly think of ways to improve efficiency and service. If a customer is unhappy, I try to figure out what went wrong and make a mental note not to repeat the mistake. If something is not working right, I problem-solve until I come up with an answer. I must be creative, perceptive and intuitive.

Now, think of all the work, paid and unpaid, that you have done. Include official occupations (e.g., plumber, fry cook, receptionist; and tasks (e.g., housework, yardwork, babysitting, etc.). Take a few minutes so you don’t leave anything out. Now, use the auto mechanic example as a

guide to fill out the *Skills and Abilities Chart* on the next page.

Any skills listed in more than one column are transferable and can move from one job or workplace to another. Most adults have more than 500 skills and personal qualities that are desired by employers. The more of these you can identify and discuss, the better your chances of connecting with an employer. Expanding your list also can lead you to job opportunities and employers that you had not considered until now.

After identifying your skills, the next step is to provide examples on the chart (see next page) of when they were demonstrated and any other information that would be of interest to an employer. Examples: “I drove a forklift in the Acme Distribution Center warehouse for three years. I received a safety award each year for having an accident-free record.” “I frequently help people convert fractions to decimals.” “Before I was laid off, I had not missed a day of work in the past seven years.” “I consistently received our department’s ‘smiley face’ trophy, for being a positive influence.”

You probably have more than 10 skills that you could comfortably market to an employer. However, for this exercise, narrow your list to five that you’d be most secure in sharing. From your skill list, select five transferable work skills that you believe have the best chance of landing you a good job. List these skills in the *Skills Demonstration Worksheet* (see the sample entry for help).

Think about the personal qualities you have identified. Have in mind specific examples of when and how you demonstrated these qualities. Select at least five that you believe have the best chance of landing you a good job, and enter them on the *Personal Qualities Demonstration Worksheet* on page 7. As before, briefly describe examples of when those qualities were demonstrated. See the sample entry for help, if needed.

Skills and abilities are the building blocks of job success. The developing economy needs workers who can transfer skills from one work setting to another and who have the kinds of personal qualities that make organizations successful. You need to identify these skills and qualities within yourself, and describe and demonstrate them in meaningful ways to employers.

## PREPARING YOURSELF

This is a good time to check if your skills need updating. Is there a class you could take that would fill a particular gap in your abilities? If you dropped out of high school, have you ever taken a General Educational Development (GED) test? Satisfactory completion of this test is equivalent to getting a high school diploma. There are short courses available to prepare for the test, and you may be able to pass it without taking a course. Get more information from your local school district, WorkSource Center or community college.

If you can't afford schooling or training while unemployed, perhaps you can work while taking classes. Your future career is as important, if not more important, than the present. Prepare for it by continuing to develop your skills. Also consider that pursuing training while seeking employment can impress a potential employer.

### If more than your skills need improvement

You might want to spend some time revitalizing your image. Try that new diet you were eyeing but never had the time to plan and cook for. Experiment with that new hairstyle you have been

## SKILLS AND ABILITIES ANALYSIS CHART

Information	People	Things	Ideas

## SKILLS DEMONSTRATION WORKSHEET

Skills	Demonstration
1. Plan and Budget	Staying within a budget, knowing where to go to get the most for one's money, being aware of sales, buying in bulk.

Skills	Demonstration
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

## PERSONAL QUALITIES DEMONSTRATION WORKSHEET

	Personal Qualities	Demonstration
1	Focus on outcomes	During a serious economic downturn, I lost two staff members but was able to complete a project on time and still maintain the highest quality.

	Personal Qualities	Demonstration
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

thinking about. Plan weekend hikes with friends or long visits to the library. Do whatever will make you feel good about yourself.

### WHERE THE JOBS ARE

Frequently, your skills are varied enough that your job search could reach in more than one direction, but which path you follow will probably depend on what jobs are available. That's why it's a good idea to understand the job market before writing your résumé. From the first day you become unemployed, you should be interested in specific job openings. You don't want to miss a single opportunity. However, you still need general information about the kinds of jobs available.

#### WorkSource

Your local WorkSource is the state's largest labor exchange. WorkSource helps thousands of people find jobs each year. On a daily basis, WorkSource lists thousands of Washington jobs and provides access to a million listings nationwide. WorkSource centers and affiliate offices throughout the state offer:

- Internet access to thousands of jobs;
- Computerized job matching and direct referrals to job leads;
- Personal computers to update your résumé and write letters;
- Copiers and laser printers; and
- Local phones and fax machines to contact employers.

The offices also have specialists dedicated to helping people find jobs. These experts in the local labor market are ready to assist you in your job search. They can show you how to prepare a résumé and how to interview effectively, connect you with retraining resources, and refer you to a variety of community resources, including local food banks and housing assistance.

Find your local WorkSource by visiting [www.go2worksource.com](http://www.go2worksource.com).

#### The Internet: A tool for success

The Internet is a powerful tool that can help you get back to work fast. Visit [www.go2worksource.com](http://www.go2worksource.com), [www.washjob.com](http://www.washjob.com), or [www.careeronestop.com](http://www.careeronestop.com) to view hundreds of thousands of job listings. You also can convert your résumé to an electronic format, apply online, view online business journals that explain local job market trends (at [www.workforceexplorer.com](http://www.workforceexplorer.com)), find out about

new businesses in your area, and learn about apprenticeships and other training opportunities. You can use the Internet for free at your local WorkSource or public library.

### **Newspaper ads**

Besides being a resource for specific listings, the want-ad section can tell you a great deal. Scan it to get a general sense of the kinds of workers in demand. Look for companies doing a lot of hiring in a variety of jobs. Even if they are not advertising anything in your field, they are obviously an expanding company and worth noting.

### **Other sources**

Once you are fairly certain of the direction your work search is taking, there are other sources of job information you can use. Your local WorkSource can help you identify and research the following sources.

**Networking.** Research consistently tells us that this “word of mouth” strategy is one of the most successful job-search techniques. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for a job. Ask about openings where your friends and neighbors work.

**Private employers.** Many large companies post job openings in their personnel (or human resources) offices.

### **Federal, state and local government.**

Personnel (or HR) offices list a wide range of job opportunities. Check the government listings in your phone book or browse listings on each agency’s Web site.

**Local public libraries** have books on occupations, often post local job announcements, and may provide access to the Internet.

**Private employment and temporary agencies** offer employment placement, but may charge a fee paid by either the employer or you.

**Community colleges and trade schools** usually offer counseling and job information to students and the general public.

**Community organizations** such as clubs, associations, women’s centers and youth organizations are a good source of information on job opportunities.

**Churches** frequently provide job-search assistance.

**Veterans placement centers** operate through WorkSource. Veterans social and service organizations often have job listings for members.

**Unions and Washington apprenticeship programs** provide job opportunities and information. Contact your state Labor and Industries apprenticeship coordinator or relevant labor union directly.

**Government-sponsored training programs** offer direct placement or short-term training and placement for applicants who qualify. Check with your local WorkSource, community college or the yellow pages under Job Training Programs or Government Services.

**Journals and newsletters for professional or trade associations** often advertise job openings in their fields and can be found at the local library.

## **THE NEW FACE OF LABOR**

A planned, focused approach that puts the job seeker in control is a more recent development. It was not long ago that young people were asked “What do you want to be?” Subsequently, they “shaped themselves” into that occupation, and often remained there for the rest of their working lives. People who changed jobs frequently were generally considered “unstable” or “unable to hold a job.”

The relatively predictable, unchanging workplace of yesterday has mostly faded away. Today, mergers, takeovers, buyouts, bankruptcies, technology and the global economy require a philosophy of continuous improvement through continual change. Organizations are constantly reinventing themselves, and positions and personnel change regularly.

Technology-product lifecycles are becoming shorter, and entire industry sectors are springing up almost overnight. Work organizations are smaller and more numerous. More individuals are starting small businesses to respond to these needs.

As a result, people are changing jobs more frequently. The average adult will change occupations every seven years. This means that individuals are responsible for managing their work lives. They must be adaptable and have a broad array of transferable skills.

Increasingly, employers are looking for people who have a “bundle of skills” rather than someone who can fill a job description.

All of this change has affected employers’ hiring practices, which in turn has redefined effective job-search techniques.

Knowing how to research and determine employer needs is critical for today's job seeker.

### **Labor-market research serves two purposes**

1. First, it provides direction for the job search. Once you have identified and evaluated your skills, you should identify employers in your area likely to hire individuals like you. With this information, you can focus on organizations where you are likely to find the best match.
2. A second purpose of labor-market research is to learn about a specific organization. This type of research helps you get to know specific employers (e.g., what they do, how they do it, what their priorities are and how they hire people).

What jobs are you qualified to do? What employers hire people with your skills and abilities? How do these employers hire? What local employer needs might you fill? Finding answers to these questions can improve your job search. Many people do not realize until after they have been hired whether their new job is a good fit for them. If they discover it is not a good fit, they either decide to stick it out (after all, it is a paycheck) or to quit and start over again. Regardless of their choice, it is not beneficial to either the employee or the employer.

It is important for job seekers to know that the chance for a good fit can be greatly improved by conducting thorough labor-market research. The right information can help answer the questions "Will I fit in here?" and "How can I best demonstrate to an employer that I am the person s/he wants?"

### **Beginning the research trail**

Many resources can help you find potential employers and tell you what is happening in your field of interest. You will want to develop a resource bank of potential employers. Some people use regular notebook paper; others use file cards or enter the information on a computer. The important thing is to record information about potential employers that you will want to contact later. This should include the name of the organization, a contact person and phone number, a statement to remind you what the organization does, notes on the organization's history and any other information that might be helpful when you call later for an informational interview.

## **Internet-based research**

### Workforceexplorer.com

Workforceexplorer.com is a comprehensive Web site designed to supply labor-market data to a wide variety of users. The site offers several important features to job seekers: Career Center, a personalized Web page, labor-market information, and data analysis. Use workforceexplorer.com to answer these critical questions:

- Where are the job openings?
- Who are the employers who hire the targeted occupations?
- What wages are employers paying in my area?
- Where can I continue my education?
- What are the fastest growing occupations?
- Where can I send my résumé?
- What is the economic profile for my area?

### **Other useful resources**

- **Local telephone directories**—Both the yellow pages and white pages list local businesses.
- **Chambers of commerce and economic development councils**—These business-oriented organizations often publish lists of local member organizations.
- **Public libraries**—Libraries have many resources such as union and trade directories.
- **Professional trade magazines.**
- **Business journals** often report on local businesses and sometimes publish annual business listings.
- **Directories** that provide information about businesses in the region and classify them in different ways (e.g., by industry, size and zip code).
- **WorkSource**—These career centers have written publications and software that provide many kinds of labor-market information.
- **The Internet**—The World Wide Web has many different job boards and specific company Web pages, each containing useful labor-market information.
- See "Useful Web Sites" on page 25.

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

An informational interview is perfect for getting information directly from employers concerning the skills and values they seek, their needs and expectations, what it is like to work in their organizations and whether they might be looking for someone like you. Informational interviews also give you valuable interviewing experience and make you more visible to people in the industry. Talking with managers and supervisors helps you see how your abilities can fit into their organization. Employers often are willing to grant 15 to 20 minutes for an informational interview, if they know what you want. This means you must plan your questions carefully and be prepared to talk about your employment goals. Informational interviews are not job interviews. Therefore, they work best with employers who are not currently hiring people in your field.

### A guide for conducting informational interviews

- Identify an employer to contact.
- Learn as much as you can about the organization.
- Use your network for information or to help set up an interview; mentioning a name that is already familiar to the employer can open many doors.
- Ask for a 20 minute, or less, appointment. Make it clear that you are not necessarily seeking a job with the company, but want to learn more about its business.
- Prepare your questions ahead of time and leave space under each question for notes.
- During the session, pay careful attention; demonstrate that the information is important to you.
- Be prepared to answer questions about you. What do you hope to gain from the interview? How will you use the information?

### Informational interview questions

Following are examples of questions that can be asked during an informational interview.

- What kind of people do you look for when hiring?
- What experience is required?

- What are the educational requirements?
- What skills, abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds are needed?
- What values or personal qualities are important?
- What is the mission, vision or goal of a typical organization in this field?
- What are major issues or concerns facing the field?
- What does the future hold? What kind of growth is anticipated?
- What is the importance of learning, training and staff development in this field?
- What advice would you give someone who wanted to enter this field?
- Who else would you recommend I speak with about getting into this field?

### Facts you should know

- Always inquire about a specific position.
- General qualifications (the ability to match your skills to the employer's wants) are what influence the decision to hire.
- Having a résumé, even for a manual labor job, is preferable to not having one.
- Smile, be friendly and be polite to everyone with whom you come in contact. Frequently, well-qualified applicants do not obtain the job because of the way they treat the receptionist.

### Job-search 101: Communication

Successful job seekers know what employers want. It's essential for you to know how to complete applications, develop résumés and design cover letters intended to attract employers and lead to more interviews. Job seekers need to know how to organize and communicate their skills and abilities in writing.

Job seekers communicate in three ways: speaking, writing, and body language. Résumés and applications focus on written communication, which is the least personal of the three. Because there is little chance for creativity, job seekers must learn to choose words carefully, display them effectively and tailor them to attract a specific reader. There are four



types of written job-search communications: the application, the résumé, the cover letter and the thank-you note. All play important roles.

## EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Completing an employment application is relatively simple. In reality, applications are a screening device, used by employers to weed out applicants who do not follow directions or pay attention to detail (especially regarding neatness). An application is actually a pre-employment test. When a person does not complete it as requested, it may end up being discarded. On the other hand, a well-done application may lead to an immediate interview. Listed below are frequent complaints employers have made about employment applications.

### You will want to avoid these

- Hard to read because of muddled or illegible handwriting.
- Words or items crossed out untidily.
- Name or address is missing or illegible.
- Cannot make contact at the phone number given.
- Applicant wrote “anything” for “type of work sought.”
- Work history reversed, with most recent buried at bottom of list.
- Application was not signed or dated.

### Basic rules for completing applications

- Pick up two copies, if possible; if not, make a photocopy or two to practice on. Save the original for the employer. However, note that many employers will expect you to be prepared, requiring you to fill out the application on site.
- Dress appropriately when picking up or returning an application. You never know who is watching; the employer may want to interview you on the spot.
- Read the application completely before writing anything.
- Note whether a specific ink color is mentioned; if not, use black or blue.

- If using a message phone, make sure it is an accurate number and that the people there are prepared to take messages.
- Spell correctly — use a dictionary.
- Be specific about the position for which you are applying. Never write “anything” or “whatever is available.”
- In the salary-desired block, write “open” or “negotiable.”
- List work history starting with your most recent employer and working backward.
- When listing your job duties, be specific. Describe what you did, to what or whom, using what skills, tools or equipment. Use action verbs — see the power words listing on page 14. This is your chance to demonstrate why you are the one for the job. Take this section of the application seriously. [Note: Never write “See résumé,” as this is viewed as unprofessional and lazy by many employers.]
- Sign and date your application.

### Reason no longer employed

Give a complete and accurate reason. If you were discharged (fired), attach a supplemental page explaining the situation, claiming responsibility and describing what you learned from the experience. As in other areas of the application, always try and find a way to honestly and positively explain or indicate a positive outcome from any negative experiences.

## THE PAPER RÉSUMÉ

A résumé lets an employer know who you are, your knowledge and skills, and what you have to offer his/her organization. A “good” résumé is designed for the reader (i.e., the employer). Therefore, an effective résumé will speak to the employer’s needs and requirements and will link what you have to offer to those requirements. A résumé is your chance to demonstrate your fit. This means you will rarely prepare a generic résumé to go to all employers. Résumé preparation involves researching the employer; thus, you’ll describe yourself in a fashion that will be attractive to the employer. The average employer spends less than 30 seconds scanning a résumé. An effective résumé combines good visual design with content that links you directly to the employer.

## Well-designed résumés usually have these common elements

- **Contact section**—Who you are and how you can be reached.
- **Objective statement**—What you want to do.
- **Qualification section**—What important qualities you want the reader to see that will set you apart from the competition. (List three to five assets.)
- **Experience and skills section**—What you have done relevant to this position.
- **Employment section\***—Where did you get your experience?
- **Education section\***—Where did you get your education?

*\*Organize the employment and education categories starting with what is most important to the employer and your career objective.*

**TIPS:** Use conventional English; avoid complicated words when simple ones will do. Use short paragraphs with concise sentences. Include key contributions from each job. List memberships in professional, trade, or civic associations, if appropriate. Keep a permanent file of your achievements, education, and employment history to refer to. Re-read your résumé before every interview.

## Preparing the résumé worksheet

Developing an effective résumé takes thought, writing, rewriting and refining. You can use this exercise to build a worksheet of base information, which you can then use to create tailored résumés for specific employers. *The sample résumés on pages 15 and 16 were prepared from a word-processing program. Places that have computers available for public use (e.g., WorkSource centers and libraries), may offer résumé software, including WinWay Résumé Maker. Power words you should use to enhance your qualifications and résumé are listed on page 14.*

## Résumé worksheet

**The first step** on your résumé draft copy is to enter your name and contact information.

**The second step** is to write the objective statement.

When applying for a particular position within a specific organization, list both the position title and the organization. Examples:

- Position as an entry-level computer technician with XYZ Company.
- Administrative assistant to Corporate President of Marketable Goods, Inc.

## The third step - the summary of qualifications

also is known as a summary profile, or highlights of qualifications, and allows you to provide a snapshot of your best qualifications. List five of the most important things you want an employer to know about you. Remember that these should be things that will connect with the employer immediately. They should relate to how you can make or save money for the company or how you can solve problems similar to those the company may experience. Your résumé is the first impression the employer will have of you, and the summary is very important when you consider how little time is spent reading a résumé. Practice writing five qualification statements. Re-write these statements until you have them just the way you want them. Remember what you learned in the “Marketing Yourself” section earlier in this booklet.

## The fourth step - the experience and skills section

allows you to describe your past accomplishments. Experience is categorized by work headings that are relevant to the position being sought. These should match the objective statement.

Under each heading is a bulleted statement of accomplishments. Outcome statements provide solid information for the reader to evaluate.

Sample accomplishments:

- Improved company marketing plan, increasing membership sales by 25%.
- Developed new hiring procedure, reducing personnel expenses by 17% in first year.

*Two sample résumés are provided for your review on pages 15 and 16. As you read these, think how your résumé would be different. These are examples to give you a basic idea of how a résumé could look.*



## THE ELECTRONIC RÉSUMÉ

Many companies now accept résumés electronically. Therefore, more people have to learn how to submit them in this way. These résumés require methods much different from preparing a paper résumé. One of the major differences is the use of keywords. Power words used on paper résumés are usually verbs (e.g., “produced,” “directed,” “managed”). Keywords are nouns (i.e., people, places and things). According to Joyce Lain Kennedy, a national authority on electronic résumés, “keywords are essential characteristics required to do the job: Education, experience, skills, knowledge and abilities.” When you submit an electronic résumé, the format is also different from a printed résumé. The following site can be used to post your electronic résumé: [www.go2worksource.com](http://www.go2worksource.com). Once you are at an employer’s site, follow the links that state “Résumé,” “Job Seekers” or “Résumé Builder” for instructions showing you how to post your résumé electronically. It can then be e-mailed to an online Web site for accepting/listing résumés. While most small employers still use traditional paper résumés, job hunters should be aware that the use of electronic résumés will continue to grow.

## THE COVER LETTER

Every paper résumé should be accompanied by a cover letter that:

- Introduces you in a personal communication to the employer;
- Expresses your knowledge of the company;
- Connects your abilities and the employer’s needs; and
- Introduces your résumé and invites the reader to explore it fully.

### Cover letter guidelines

Keep in mind the following guidelines as you prepare your cover letter:

- Use the same bond paper as your résumé.
- Personalize the letter; address it to a specific person by name and title.
- Use simple, direct language, correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. Type neatly and proofread.
- Briefly explain your reasons for writing to set the tone from the very beginning.
- Highlight your qualifications relevant to the position you are seeking.
- Close with your commitment to follow up by requesting an interview or indicating when and how you will be making your next contact.
- Sign your signature above your typed name. Make sure the cover letter you provide has the original signature instead of a photocopied signature.

### Sample cover letter

A sample cover letter is provided on page 17.

## POWER WORDS FOR RÉSUMÉS

Accompanied	Computed	Encouraged	Insured	Overcame	Relayed
Accumulated	Conducted	Engineered	Integrated	Packaged	Renewed
Achieved	Conferred	Entertained	Interpreted	Packed	Reorganized
Acquired	Constructed	Established	Interviewed	Paid	Repaired
Administered	Consulted	Estimated	Introduced	Participated	Replaced
Admitted	Contacted	Evaluated	Inventoried	Patrolled	Reported
Advised	Contracted	Examined	Investigated	Perfected	Requested
Aided	Contrasted	Exchanged	Invoiced	Performed	Researched
Allowed	Controlled	Exhibited	Issued	Piloted	Reserved
Analyzed	Converted	Expanded	Judged	Placed	Responsible
Answered	Convinced	Experienced	Justified	Planned	Retrieved
Applied	Coordinated	Fabricated	Kept	Posted	Revised
Appointed	Copied	Fed	Learned	Prepared	Routed
Appraised	Corrected	Figured	Lectured	Prescribed	Scheduled
Assembled	Corresponded	Filed	Led	Presented	Secured
Assessed	Counseled	Filled	Licensed	Priced	Selected
Assigned	Counted	Financed	Listed	Printed	Sent
Assisted	Created	Finished	Listened	Processed	Separated
Attached	Debated	Fired	Loaded	Produced	Served
Authorized	Decided	Fitted	Located	Programmed	Serviced
Balanced	Delivered	Fixed	Logged	Promoted	Set up
Billed	Demonstrated	Formulated	Mailed	Prompted	Shown
Bought	Deposited	Founded	Maintained	Proof read	Sold
Budgeted	Described	Governed	Managed	Proposed	Solicited
Built	Designed	Graded	Manufactured	Proved	Sorted
Calculated	Detailed	Graphed	Marked	Provided	Stocked
Cashed	Determined	Greeted	Measured	Published	Stored
Catalogued	Developed	Handled	Met	Purchased	Straightened
Changed	Devised	Headed	Modified	Ran	Summarized
Charged	Diagnosed	Helped	Monitored	Rated	Supervised
Charted	Discovered	Hired	Motivated	Read	Supplied
Checked	Dismantled	Identified	Negotiated	Rearranged	Tallied
Classified	Dispatched	Implemented	Nominated	Rebuilt	Taught
Cleaned	Dispensed	Improved	Noted	Recalled	Telephoned
Cleared	Displayed	Improvised	Notified	Received	Tested
Closed	Directed	Increased	Numbered	Recommended	Transferred
Coded	Distributed	Indexed	Observed	Reconciled	Transported
Collected	Documented	Indicated	Obtained	Recorded	Tutored
Commanded	Drew	Informed	Opened	Reduced	Typed
Communicated	Drove	Initiated	Operated	Referred	Verified
Compiled	Earned	Inspected	Ordered	Registered	
Completed	Educated	Installed	Organized	Regulated	
Composed	Employed	Instructed	Outlined	Related	

## BEVERLY M. SCOTT

9065 N. Hillegass Avenue - Tacoma, WA 98499 - (253) 265-0001(h)

### OBJECTIVE:

Entry level clerical/office support position in small office or private business

### PROFILE:

- Excellent customer service and telephone communication skills
- Friendly, courteous and articulate
- Enthusiastic, committed to professional growth
- Familiar with word processing, type 55 WPM, and operate 10-key by touch
- Dependable and reliable

### RELATED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE:

General Office Support and Customer Service

- Assisted office manager in orienting and assigning new employees
- Prepared new employee personnel folders
- Posted and filed documents and personnel records
- Typed and formatted correspondence and documents using Microsoft Word
- Answered phone and appropriately routed calls
- Provided information about business services to customers via phone and in person
- Resolved basic customer problems with accounts via phone and in person
- Operated multi-functional XEROX copier
- Scheduled appointments for 10 staff persons

Bookkeeping

- Accurately recorded customer payments
- Reconciled cash register drawer
- Made deposits
- Reconciled monthly bank statements
- Entered financial data into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets
- Processed payroll and completed quarterly tax documents for four employees

### WORK EXPERIENCE:

2007 – 09	Office Assistant	Computers!Computers!, Tacoma
2004 – 07	Customer Service Clerk	Financial Records Services, Lakewood

### EDUCATION:

Tacoma Community College

Business Coursework: Business Math  
Word Processing  
Payroll Accounting  
Principles of Accounting

## JAMES BANKS

1155 Cromwell Circle SE  
Bellingham, WA 98071  
(360) 676-1100 (h)

### OBJECTIVE

Position in construction and maintenance

### SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Hands on knowledge of virtually all phases of construction
- Resourceful in solving problems and maximizing resources
- Own basic hand tools
- Enjoy a challenge, work hard to do the best job possible
- Equally effective working alone or as a member of a team
- Strong skills in organizing work flow, ideas, materials, people

### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

#### Repair and Maintenance Skills

- Building repair  
Replaced broken windows, made screens, hung doors and jambs, hung and patched drywall, installed electrical switches and outlets, moved phone jacks, rewired disconnect and breaker panels, installed and repaired lighting, poured concrete, repaired copper piping and other basic plumbing maintenance.
- Mechanical repair  
Repaired chillers, boilers, water softeners, ice machines, and washing machines.

#### Construction and Installation

- Construction  
Performed all phases from start to finish: including carpentry, brick work, concrete finishing, electrical work, plumbing, drywall and lathing, painting, all types of roofing, and sheet metal work.
- Heating Installation  
Installed air-tight furnaces, including chimney, ductwork and electrical work.

#### Client Relations and Supervision

As Assistant Manager, supervised the parts department:

- Developed thorough knowledge of all parts and kept informed on new products; found items for customers without delay.
- Assessed customer's needs and advised on parts required; explained cost and benefits of products to customers in relation to their needs.
- Checked that parts were installed promptly and work done to the customer's satisfaction.
- Always available to help customers solve problems and willing to put in extra hours.

### WORK HISTORY

2005 – 09	Building Maintenance Worker	Meeks Retirement Center, Bellingham, WA
2000 – 05	Assistant Manager, Parts	Herrington Ford, Bellingham, WA
1997 – 00	Construction Worker	Hailey Construction, Centrailia, WA
1992 – 97	Sheet Metal Installer	Concordia Heat & Air, Portland, OR

**JAMES BANKS**

1155 Cromwell Circle SE  
Bellingham, WA 98071 - (360) 676-1100

April 20, 2009  
Richard Cannavaro  
General Manager  
Westside Independent Living Facilities  
1122 Boogie Avenue NE  
Bellingham, WA 98071

Dear Mr. Cannavaro;

Your Maintenance Supervisor, Roger Foreman, explained that you are seeking a professional building maintenance worker who is highly skilled in all aspects of general construction and building repair. Because of my strong technical skill and commitment to customer service, I believe that I can meet your needs.

As the largest retirement center in Bellingham, you have an excellent reputation for providing well-kept facilities and responding to resident issues promptly. Your establishment is well known for emphasizing safety, security, and dependability. In order to maintain your reputation, I am sure that you are selective when evaluating the qualifications of prospective employees.

For the past four years, I have been a building maintenance worker for a medium-sized retirement center, where I have been recognized for treating residents courteously and respectfully while responding quickly to maintenance and repair situations that are stressful to them. I have a strong background in the construction industry, and my abilities range from basic electrical work to plumbing, roofing, hanging drywall, and installing sheet metal ductwork.

The enclosed résumé details other qualifications I can offer. After you have had a chance to review it, I would like to meet with you in person to discuss the position. I will call you next Monday to try to schedule a meeting. In the meantime, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*James Banks*

## THE INTERVIEW

Although studies show that job interviews are not necessarily the best way to make hiring decisions, most employers use them. They like the face-to-face contact, and the interview gives them an opportunity to see how candidates present themselves and how they think on their feet.

Besides interviews, many larger companies now use a variety of strategies to make hiring decisions. They may require drug screenings, administer personality tests and may use placement firms to do their initial “weeding,” or even their hiring. Many firms also use employees who work temporarily—to make sure there is a good fit—before being hired permanently. However, most organizations continue to depend on the interview as the ultimate basis for making hiring decisions.

**Questions to keep in mind:** What are the advantages of understanding the employer’s perspective when preparing for an interview? What does a poor hiring decision mean to an employer? If you were an employer, what would you be looking for during an interview?

### Preparing for the interview

Successful interviews involve much preparation. This means practice and rehearsal! Everything you say and do will be observed and rated, so you want it to be your best. The following activities can help you prepare for the interview.

**Researching the organization**—learn as much as possible about the organization.

- What is the purpose of the organization?
- What does it accomplish?
- Is it a for-profit company, a non-profit organization or a public agency?
- Who are the major customers?
- What are their customers’ needs?
- What is the history of the organization? What is its reputation?
- Does the organization observe specific customs or cultural practices that you should know about?

### Collecting and organizing the paperwork

Get all of the necessary paperwork together:

- Job application
- Résumé
- References
- Letters of recommendation
- Work samples
- Social Security number
- Citizenship and/or immigration data
- Required licenses and/or identification cards

Place all paperwork in a well organized folder so you can find it easily.

### Tending to your appearance

- Make sure you are well-groomed, neat and clean.
- Wear appropriate clothing for the work setting. (Researching the organization may help you here.) You probably would not wear a suit/dress for a mechanical or warehouse position, although blue jeans and a T-shirt could also be inappropriate, and casual wear would be out of place in a formal office setting.
- Avoid perfumes or after-shave lotions. Many people are allergic to scents.
- Do not approach the interview smelling of smoke. If your clothing smells of smoke, have it washed or cleaned before the interview.
- Get plenty of sleep the night before the interview. Make sure you look and feel your best.

### Getting there

- Being late is never a good way to start an interview. Know exactly how to get to the appointment. Have an alternate route in mind for accidents, road closures, etc.
- Ideally, arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled interview.
- If you are using public transportation, make sure you know the route. Take an earlier bus, in case the regular one is late.
- Learn the names of people you will likely meet, and be able to spell and pronounce them properly.
- Go to the interview alone. Do not take anyone with you.

- Relax and take a deep breath. Be confident. Remember, you were invited to the interview because you have something to offer.

## **Arriving**

- Be on your best behavior.
- Display excellent manners.
- Shake hands and use a friendly greeting (e.g., “Pleased to meet you”).
- Pay attention at all times.

## **Non-verbal messages**

Some studies indicate that 90 percent of a message or more is communicated non-verbally, and 10 percent or less is actually expressed through words. This means how you act in your interview is crucial. Following are examples of important non-verbal messages.

**Eye contact**—Looking a person in the eye frequently indicates confidence, openness and honesty. Employers normally expect eye contact. However, this may be difficult for some people.

**Voice**—Your voice should be clear and loud enough to travel across a room. Practice speaking clearly and pronouncing words correctly.

**Facial expressions**—A slight smile and alert eyes exhibits astuteness, alertness and friendliness.

**Posture**—Walk/stand tall and straight, sit forward in your chair, hold your head high and keep your back and shoulders straight.

**Attitude**—Your body language can express how you feel. Think about the message and attitude you want to communicate, and practice using body language to reinforce that message. Never cross your arms — this sends the interviewer a negative or aggressive message.

**The handshake**—First impressions happen immediately, but can last forever. After your appearance, the next characteristic an interviewer notices is your handshake. Make sure you present a suitably firm grip that conveys confidence.

**Remember**—You don’t get more than one chance to make a good first impression.

## **Stages of an interview**

Listed below are the typical stages of an interview. Many interviews have a natural progression. Understanding this may help you track where you are in the interview, and thus be better prepared for what comes next.

### **Introductory stage**

The interviewer should take the lead. There usually is a brief exchange of pleasantries. The interviewer usually tries to help the you feel at ease. They typically provide background information regarding the company and the position. A mutual “sizing-up” process frequently happens in this stage.

### **Inquiry stage** (the longest part of the interview)

The interviewer still has the lead. S/he questions and evaluates. The line of questioning concerns what you can do for the organization. You should listen for clues to organizational issues that you can address. Keep your replies positive, brief and appropriate. Think of past job experiences, accomplishments or personal characteristics to help you with your responses.

### **Marketing stage**

You now usually have about one minute to demonstrate how your abilities and experiences can benefit the organization, if you’re hired. You must show interest and desire to work for the employer and explain why you are the best candidate. Demonstrate how you can save and make money for the company or how you could resolve problems similar to those the company may experience.

### **Closure**

The hiring process is clarified (i.e., when a decision will be made, when you would report for work, and how you will be notified). Salary range is discussed, if appropriate (rarely). You clearly repeat your desire to take the job along with the reasons why, and then you thank the interviewer for spending the time to interview you for the position.

### **Think like an employer**

Many job applicants approach the interview concerned about what they’re going to say or how they will come across, instead of thinking about the employer’s point of view. Applicants who are “tuned in” to the interviewer will be considered much more favorably than those who are thinking about themselves. Anticipating and responding to an employer’s concerns conveys an important message. “I understand the concerns you experience when hiring someone new.”



**Note:** Interviewers rarely ask, “What if you do not blend in?” However, the sharp job seeker understands this question is on the employer’s mind and looks for an opportunity to address it up front so it will no longer be an issue.

Job seekers may not realize that employers can also be nervous during an interview. They are under pressure to make good hiring decisions. Hiring the wrong person costs time and money, and may result in legal problems. Placing yourself in the employer’s position can give you insight regarding his/her expectations before the interview even begins.

### **Anticipating employer’s concerns**

Thinking like an employer means anticipating his/her concerns and addressing them up front. This acknowledges that you understand the situation and will be an asset rather than a liability. The following is a list of common employer concerns. Under each one, write a few keywords you could use during an interview to assure the employer that you will not cause this kind of problem.

What happens if the person I hire:

**Example:** Does not fit in.

Your keywords might be: Adaptable, flexible, adjust quickly, get along with all kinds of people.

- Does not get along with co-workers.
- Does not get along with customers, or does not represent the organization well.
- Can not solve problems, but creates them.
- Is not dependable.
- Soon moves on to another job in another place.
- Is not able to handle the pace or pressure of the work.
- Does not dress or behave appropriately.
- Will not take on responsibility or work independently.
- Is distracted by personal problems.
- Is not honest and trustworthy and lacks integrity.
- Is not loyal to the organization.

Ideal job candidates have similar qualities. The best way to demonstrate these assets to an employer is to describe situations where you have used them successfully. Under each of the qualities below, write a few keywords to remind you of when you used these qualities. Write just enough to trigger your memory so you can discuss them in an interview. Also, write a brief description for each of your qualities.

- **Accepting responsibility**—When have you “stepped up to the plate” without being asked or directed to do so?
- **Handling conflict**—What have you done to resolve differences with others? How have you exhibited good judgment in conflict situations?
- **Communicating effectively**—On what occasions have you organized your thoughts and expressed them clearly and concisely? When have you proved to be a good listener?
- **Solving problems**—When have you identified a problem and found a creative solution for it?
- **Being a learner**—When have you learned something quickly (e.g., a new job assignment)? What are you doing now to demonstrate that you are a career learner?
- **Being a team player**—When working in a team, have you been a leader, a follower or both? What experience do you have working with different kinds of people?

### **Interview questions**

Most interview questions are designed to determine what you can do for the employer. Giving an example of what you have done in the past and relating it to this employer is an effective response. This type of answer generally begins with “I can . . . , and here is how I did . . .”

Employers use interviews to determine how a person thinks and responds. The following is an example of responses to a frequently asked interview question about managing conflict. It can help provide structure to your own answer. Sample interview questions follow the list of potential responses. After each question, write a few keywords to help you during the interview. Remember, when answering these questions, think “What is the purpose of this question?” “What qualities is the employer looking for?” “How can I best answer this so I am addressing the employer’s concerns?” “How can I answer this in the most positive way?”

### **Example of a potential response**

- I. “I handled conflict in the past by acting as a facilitator with two colleagues who had a serious disagreement about a flowchart process. I helped them focus on the task, rather than personalities, and they were able to agree on their next step.” Provide details, but not names, about who, what, where, when, how and why.



2. Provide numbers, if possible, to support your statement. "The discussion took about 15 minutes."
3. Describe the positive results of your action. "Having them work through their disagreement resulted in a more effective flowchart process, and the final product was much better than either had envisioned. Because of their work, the overall project was completed three days earlier than anticipated and came in under budget. The two employees also said they had learned how to work through disagreements in the future."
4. Show the employer how your example applies to their situation: "I know this position requires good communication and problem-solving skills and the ability to work with a variety of individuals. I believe this example shows that I possess these characteristics."

### Examples of employer questions

- Can you tell me something about yourself?
- What are your qualifications for this position?
- We have many qualified applicants. Why do you think you should be selected before them?
- What experiences do you have relating to this job?
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments?
- Are there any areas of weakness that you would like to improve?
- Why are you interested in working here?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- What are your short- and long-term goals/plans?
- Do you prefer to work alone or with others? Explain.
- Tell me about your relationship with your previous supervisor/employer.
- How well do you take instructions or criticism?
- What experiences do you have working as part of a team?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What did you like most about your last job? What did you like least?
- What type of salary are you expecting?

Remember, for each question, select key words to formulate an answer. Practice giving the answers to a friend and asking for feedback. What were the strongest points of the response? What suggestions could s/he offer for improvement?

If you have your keywords in mind and focus on the employer's needs and expectations, you will do well in any interview.

Many employers ask behavioral questions (e.g., "How would you handle this particular problem?" or "What would you do if that occurred?"). They want to see if you are capable of handling specific situations. Your ability to say, "I have already done this" can be a powerful response. The important point is that you select words and phrases that help you become a successful interviewee.

### Questions you can ask at an interview

Most interviews will end with the employer asking if you have questions. These questions are often used to determine how interested you are in the position and how much thought you have given to the interview. Listen carefully to the employer's answers; you can learn even more about the organization you hope to join. Following are questions you can ask at the interview.

- How does this position work with the overall organization?
- Is this a new position?
- What happened to individuals who held this position in the past?
- What exactly would you like me to accomplish in this position?
- How soon will you make a hiring decision?
- Do you have other questions that I could clarify before I leave?

Whenever possible, try to link your questions to topics that arose during the interview. For example: "Earlier, we discussed my short- and long-term goals. How do those fit in with the goals of your organization?"

### Then, ask yourself these questions

- What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
- Did I present my qualifications well?
- Did I overlook any important qualifications?
- Did I learn all I considered necessary to be familiar with the job?
- Did I ask all the questions I had about the job?

- Did I talk too much? Too little?
- Was I too tense? Too relaxed?
- Was I too aggressive? Too passive?
- Was I dressed appropriately?
- Did I effectively close the interview?

Make a list of specific ways you can improve for your next interview.

## TESTING

For some jobs, you may need to take a test. Typically, the job announcement or advertisement will state if a test is required. There are several types of selection and job-fitness tests.

**Aptitude tests** predict your ability to learn and perform job tasks.

**Skill tests** measure your knowledge of and ability to perform a job (e.g., word-processing speed for a clerical job, knowledge of street names and routes for a delivery driver, etc.).

**Literacy tests** measure reading and arithmetic levels.

**Personality tests** evaluate mental, emotional and temperamental makeup (important for jobs like a police officer, nuclear plant operator, etc.).

**Integrity tests** evaluate the likelihood of employee honesty, reliability or theft.

**Physical ability tests** measure strength, flexibility, stamina and speed for jobs that require physical performance.

**Medical tests** determine physical fitness for a specific job.

**Drug tests** indicate the presence of drugs that could impair job performance or threaten the safety of others.

## Preparing for tests

You can't study specifically for aptitude tests, but you can prepare to do your best by taking other tests. Look for tests or quizzes in magazines and books. Set time limits. Practicing will help you feel comfortable when you are tested. Brush up on your job skills.

For example, if you are taking a typing test, practice typing. If you are taking a construction test, review construction books and blueprints. Prepare for physical tests by performing activities similar to those required for the job. For literacy tests, review and complete exercises in reading and math books or enroll in remedial classes. It is natural to be nervous concerning tests, and some anxiety may even help you.

## Tips for taking tests

- Put together a list of what you need for the test (pencil, eyeglasses, calculator, I.D., etc.). Check the list before leaving for the test.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- If you do not feel well, call and reschedule the test.
- Leave for the test site in time to arrive 15 minutes early.
- If you have any physical difficulties, tell the test administrator.
- If you do not understand the test instructions, ask for help before the test begins.
- Work as fast as you can. Do not linger over difficult questions.
- Ask if guessing is penalized. If it is not, guess on questions you are not sure about.
- You may be able to retake the test. Ask about the re-testing policy.

## The thank-you letter

Within a week after the interview, send a thank-you note to the person(s) who interviewed you. If you are still interested in the job, restate your interest and availability.

The thank-you letter may actually be the final decision in the selection process. The reasons for writing a thank-you note are:

- It marks the writer as a knowledgeable, considerate individual.
- It demonstrates appreciation for the employer's time and effort.

- It reminds the reader of who you are (some interviewers see many applicants per week and have difficulty distinguishing among them).
- It reinforces your "fit" with the organization.
- It indicates that you continue to be interested in the position.

If an employer is weighing the difference between two equally qualified applicants, a thank-you letter can make the difference in his/her decision. An example follows.

### SAMPLE THANK-YOU LETTER

August 8, 2009  
Ms. Martha Lewis  
Personnel Director  
Ajax Company  
1234 Number Street  
Yakima, WA 54321

Dear Ms. Lewis:

I want to thank you for taking time to talk with me on Wednesday. It was a pleasure to meet you and to learn more about the Training and Coordinator position at the Ajax Company. I also appreciated the opportunity to discuss my skills and experience.

I was extremely impressed by what I learned about your organization and would be pleased to become part of it. I also felt completely comfortable discussing my approach to training with you because it is so similar to the philosophy at Ajax Company.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
John Q. Jobseeker

## AFTER YOU GET THE JOB

Now you know that unemployment is no myth and can happen to you. It can happen to anyone at any time. Once you have found your new job, keep all of the materials you used in your job search and file them away under job-seeking information. This will assist you in your next job search.

**Network continuously**—Keep aware of who, when, what and where in all matters related to your line of work. Developing your networking skills will help you grow professionally.

**Do not burn bridges**—Try to maintain any contacts you made in your job search. On your new job, conduct yourself in a way that will help your chances for promotion.

**Good attendance and punctuality** are very important for all employees. Remember, you initially want to establish, and then keep, that professional “first impression.”

**Continue to learn**—Keep your future career in mind. Seize every opportunity to receive training and gain knowledge that will enhance your employability. Keep current in what is happening in your trade or profession, particularly where technology is concerned.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Bolles, Richard N., What Color is Your Parachute? Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707 / updated annually.

Yate, Martin, Knock'em Dead 2010: The Ultimate Job-Search Guide, Adams Media / October 18, 2009

Michael Farr, Marie A. Pavliclo, Ed.D., Young Person's Guide to Getting and Keeping a Good Job, Third edition, JIST Publishing / 2006.

Neil McNulty., The Quick 30/30 Job Solution: Smart Job Search Tips for Surviving Today's New Economy, Impact Publications / August 2009.

Woodward, Jeanette, Finding a Job after 50, Reinvent Yourself for the 21st Century, Career Press, Inc. / 2007.

Levinson, Jay Conrad, Perry, David E., Guerrilla Marketing for Job Hunters 2.0, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.,/June 22, 2009.

### Résumés

Moreira, Paula, ACE the IT Résumé: Resumes and Cover Letters to Get You Hired, McGraw-Hill Osborne Media / 2007

Criscito, Pat, How to Write Better Résumés and Cover Letters Barron's Educational Series, 2008.

Yate, Martin, Knock 'Em Dead Cover Letters, Adams Media Corp., 8TH Ed. / 2008

Donlin, Kevin, Résumé and Cover Letters Secrets Revealed / 2009.

VGM Career Horizons (Editor) Résumé for Mid-Career Job Changes, with Sample Cover Letters, The McGraw-Hill Companies, March 2006

Yates, Martin, Knock 'Em Dead Resumes: Features the Latest Information on: Online Postings, Email Techniques, and Follow-up Strategies (Resumes That Knock 'em Dead) Adams Media Corporation, 8th Edition / October 2008

## Interviews

DeLuca, Matthew and DeLuca, Nanette, 24 Hours to the Perfect Interview: Quick steps for Planning, Organizing and Preparing for the Interview that gets the Job, McGraw-Hill Professional / 2004.

Beshara, Tony, Acing the Interview: How to Ask and Answer the Questions That Will Get You the Job, AMACOM / 2008

Kessler, Robin Competency-Based Interviews: Master the Tough New Interview Style And Give Them the Answers That Will Win You the Job, Career Press, 2006

## Internet job search

Dikel, Margaret, Roehm, Frances, The Guide to Internet Job Searching 2008-2009 edition / March 18, 2008 McGraw-Hill

Crispin, Gerry, and Mehler, Mark, CareerXroads 2004, Jist Publishing / 2004

## Useful Web Sites

### Job Boards:

Washington State  
[www.go2worksource.com](http://www.go2worksource.com)

Washington Employment Web Page  
[www.washjob.com/](http://www.washjob.com/)

Workforce Explorer  
[www.workforceexplorer.com/](http://www.workforceexplorer.com/)

America's Career One Stop  
[www.careeronestop.com](http://www.careeronestop.com)

True Careers  
[www.jobdirect.com/](http://www.jobdirect.com/)

(good for students)

## Interviews

[www.pse-net.com/interview/interview.htm](http://www.pse-net.com/interview/interview.htm)

Résumés  
<http://quintcareers.careerperfect.com/?src=resumes>

Salary Negotiation  
<http://quintcareers.com/job-offer-tutorial/>

Free Training  
[www.gcflearnfree.org](http://www.gcflearnfree.org)

Internet Tutorial  
[www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html)

Translations  
[www.freelang.net](http://www.freelang.net)  
Dictionaries, etc.  
<http://dictionary.reference.com>  
(variety including grammar, thesaurus, translator, etc.)

[www.computeruser.com/resources/dictionary/](http://www.computeruser.com/resources/dictionary/)  
(definitions to more than 7,000 high-tech terms)

[www.acronymfinder.com/](http://www.acronymfinder.com/)  
(government, military, Internet acronyms)

Websites for finding businesses  
(and information about them):  
[www.reversephonedirectory.com](http://www.reversephonedirectory.com)

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